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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA STATE GAZETTEERS

Submitted by Roger Payne, U.S. Geological Survey

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The National Gazetteer of the United States of America is being published as U.S.

Geological Survey Professional Paper 1200 with each State, territory, and outlying area to be published as a separate volume. The National Gazetteer is a product of the Geographic Names Information System (GNIS). Data compilation for the National Geographic Names Data Base, the primary component of GNIS, is accomplished in two phases. Phase I, begun in 1976 and completed in 1981, entailed the collecting and recording of most names and associated information from the large-scale topographic maps published by the U.S. Geological Survey, and the records of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

Approximately 2 million feature names and variant names were recorded and processed into the National Geographic Names Data Base.

Phase II, the compilation and collection of names and associated information from other sources, was begun in 1982 and has a projected completion date of 1998-2002. Research and compilation in this phase is more comprehensive and therefore more time consuming. Instructions detailing the methodology for researching, compiling, and encoding names and associated information are provided in U.S. Geological Survey Circular 1011 (Orth and Payne, 1987). Checks and balances are built into the methodology as well as in the GNIS data input software to ensure adherence to the principles and policies of the Board on Geographic Names.



Quality and detail are paramount in this effort; therefore, the assistance of local experts and interested organizations is solicited for compiling data for each State. Figure 1 shows the status of the second phase of compilation, completion of which leads to the publication of a State volume of the National Gazetteer. Depending upon the particulars of a State, the compilation effort requires approximately 2 to 2 1/2 years and about 6 months processing time before a State gazetteer is published. Geological Survey experts are presently investigating the possible distribution of all formal and preliminary names gazetteers on compact disks.